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**AB 1510 – Parental and Guardian Right to an Interpreter**  
*Sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union &  
Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality*  
**FACT SHEET**

**SUMMARY**

AB 1510 will allow parents of English learners to communicate more effectively with their child's teachers and administrators by reinforcing the parent's right to an oral interpreter in school-related parent meetings in the event existing federal and state law does not require one.

**THE PROPOSAL**

While federal and state law requires interpreters under certain circumstances, there is evidence that a majority of school districts do not have a formal policy in place and that many deny requests for interpreters due to a lack of resources. Thus, AB 1510 would clearly define, in California Education Code, the right of parents and legal guardians to bring an oral language interpreter to school-sponsored meetings, except where it is in conflict with federal and state law. It is important to also note that this bill will not preclude the existing duties under federal and state law to provide a language interpreter.

**BACKGROUND**

California schools are becoming increasingly diverse, with millions of English Learner students across the state. One in four students in California's K-12 public school system is an English Learner, according to statistics from the California Department of Education. Census 2000 data shows that 40 percent of all Californians five years and over speak a language other than English at home. One in five are limited-English proficient (LEP), including over 4.3 million LEP Spanish speakers and 1.5 million LEP Asian language speakers. It has been projected that, by the 2007–2008 academic year, there will be 6.2 million students in California schools, 70 percent of whom will be students of color, one-fourth of whom will not speak English as their first language.

The federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and similar state laws have been interpreted through regulations and court cases to require school districts "to take affirmative steps to provide equal access to educational programs for students with limited proficiency in English" and to provide interpreters.

Unfortunately, inadequate knowledge of existing laws and declining resources cause many school districts to struggle to meet translation and interpreter needs for LEP parents. Many school districts do not have formal policies for providing interpreters. As a result, many limited English proficiency parents are unaware of their rights and thus make decisions about their child's life without completely understanding existing laws.

Additionally, because of diminishing state and local resources, even districts that make attempts at providing interpreters often fall short. For example, The Los Angeles Unified School District translation unit denied one-third of the 7,488 requests for interpreters and translators. This bill reinforces efforts made by districts by providing parents with the flexibility and right to an interpreter.